

## **ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey**

### **Grant Application for The ASPIRACorps Program**

#### **1. Capability of the Organization**

##### **History and Mission**

ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey is applying to the United Way for match funding for its AmeriCorps Program (ASPIRACorps) at the Dr. Horton School and Luis Munoz Marin Middle School. Both schools are located in Newark's North Ward which has a large, low-income Latino and African American population.

ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey was founded in 1968 to assist disadvantaged inner city Puerto Rican/Latino and other minority youths who are at risk of dropping out of school. Its mission is to develop a more motivated, better educated, and more community conscious youth. ASPIRA works in partnership with parents, teachers, administrators and other school personnel to reach those middle and high school students with a history of truancy, behavioral problems and poor academic standing.

ASPIRA is open to any student who wishes to join the organization. Our present enrollment in the North Ward includes students who are primarily Puerto Rican/Latino, African American, White, Portuguese, and Asian.

The Clinton's Administration creation of AmeriCorps is quite similar to the philosophy of ASPIRA. AmeriCorps is a community service program that looks to improve the quality of life of individuals. Similarly ASPIRA has been developing the skills of disadvantaged children to not only graduated from high school, but to excel academically. Supportive services are implemented to ensure that students do not become discouraged with their plight. For over 28 years ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey has been the guiding light to many urban children who needed direction and encouragement.

The philosophy of AmeriCorps of "Getting things Done" is related to ASPIRA Leadership Development Model. Most notably is the last phase of the model called "Action". After students develop a foundation of who they are culturally, and understand the socioeconomic situation they are often confronted with, students develop a plan of action to implement. The phase of action is about "Getting thing done" to improve the quality of life of all.

During the past three years, the ASPIRACorps Program has assisted hundreds of students in academic development, literacy skills, cultural awareness, and civic responsibility. Through the program, partnerships have been forged with a number of community agencies. AmeriCorps members have made the difference in many lives through their simple acts of kindness.

Since its inception in 1968 as a small storefront agency in Newark, New Jersey, ASPIRA has expanded to provide services statewide in 5 major urban centers: Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, Trenton, and Camden. Operating with great dedication, the organization has for the past 28 years assisted more than 35,000 at-risk minority youths in urban middle schools and high schools.

Of this number, 90% remained in school and obtained their high school diplomas; and 80% continued their studies at a college or other post-secondary institution. ASPIRA has produced many leaders, who are now actively involved in the improvement of their communities. ASPIRACorps is an extension of the successful history of ASPIRA.

#### Qualifications and Experience of Management and Staff

Roberto Del Rios, Executive Director, received a B.A. in psychology and sociology, and an MSW in Administration from Rutgers University. Mr. Del Rios has had extensive experience in the social service field, having worked as a Senior Peer Advisor/Counselor for the Rutgers University Educational Opportunity Program, as a counselor to high school truants and their families for La Casa de Don Pedro, Inc., and in various positions, including that of Program Director, for ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey. As Executive Director of ASPIRA, he administers all of the agency's programs and centers in New Jersey, including Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, Camden, and Trenton. Mr. Del Rios, who is bilingual, sits on many boards, including the Rutgers College E.O.F. Advisory Board, the Council for the Education of Linguistic Minority Students, the Greater Newark Human Relations Commission, and the Puerto Rican Task Force of Essex County, among others.

Grace Merez, Fiscal Officer, obtained a B.S. in accounting from Rutgers University, Newark. Ms. Merez has been with ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey since 1986. Prior to that time, she was a figure clerk with the Prudential Insurance Company in Newark. Ms. Merez is in charge of the Finance Department of ASPIRA, and is responsible for receivable and accounts payable; preparation of financial statements; maintaining employees' payroll records; posting to various ledgers; preparing spread sheets; and management of fiscal aspects of grants.

Carmen Nazario, Secretary, has been with ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey for 19 years. She is responsible for office management; typing letters, board reports, program reports, and financial reports; maintaining records of grant awards; answer the telephone; working on fund raisers; and performing other duties

as assigned by the Executive Director. Like many of the other staff members, Ms. Nazario is bilingual (Spanish/English).

Gloria Perez, Program Director, received a Bachelor of Arts from Glassboro State College and a Masters in Social Work from Rutgers University. She began working with ASPIRA in 1986 as a Leadership Development Counselor. In 1987, she managed the Hispanic Girls on the Move, which introduced middle school students to non-traditional careers. In 1988, she left ASPIRA to pursue her Master's degree. She returned in 1994 to manage the AmeriCorps Community Service Program. She has a strong interest and commitment to academic development and understands the importance of providing students with a sound foundation for academic achievement.

#### AmeriCorps Members

The AmeriCorps Members are a community of individuals who are committed to improving the quality of life of others through national service. Ninety percent of the participants have earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, and one is presently pursuing the degree. Their specialties include: science, English, math, special education, and history. All have a genuine interest in aiding the educational achievement of Newark youth and eighty percent have expressed an interest in pursuing a teaching profession.

Volunteers, from local colleges, human service organizations, businesses, and municipal government, conduct training workshops and motivational speaking engagements for staff members and students.

#### ASPIRA's Previous Experience in Providing Similar Services

Since 1968 ASPIRA has maintained that service to the community is of the utmost importance. The ASPIRACorps focuses on the in-class academic development of students. ASPIRA has been providing tutorial service to urban children since the inception of its programs. The ASPIRACorps program also unique promotes civic responsibility, which is a critical component of ASPIRA's Leadership Program.

#### Community Outreach Efforts

Our mission is to develop a more community conscious youth, who through active participation in meaningful projects, will develop a life-long interest in serving and improving the community. ASPIRACorps coordinates many community service projects in which our students participate, such as assisting in a soup kitchen, planning activities for the elderly in a nursing home, participating in a march against drugs, hosting a holiday

party in a battered women's shelter for the women and their children, designing and making a peace quilt, and painting a mural depicting the theme, "Making our Communities Better - One Step at a Time."

#### Method of Recruiting Clients for the Initiative

Students will be recruited from the two schools identified that have a large percentage of economically disadvantaged areas. Services will be provided through the ASPIRACorps Members who are sought out by individual teachers that seek assistance in the classroom. Students who do demonstrate an inability to keep pace academically will serve as the primary target.

#### ASPIRA's Proposed Fundraising Plans for 1997-98

ASPIRA is funded with federal, state, county, and municipal grants, as well as with corporate and foundation grants. We are making a concerted effort to obtain funding support from the Newark Public Schools. Lastly, the Board of Directors have initiated plans to develop an Alumni Association that can serve as a funding base and a network to new funding sources.

No funds previously received from United Way or other sources have ever been suspended or revoked.

## 2. Need for the ASPIRACorps Program

### Description of the Community (City of Newark and the North Ward) and the Target Population.

The ASPIRACorps Program will target male and female youths at-risk, who are in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at the Dr. Horton School and the Luis Munoz Marin Middle School, located in Newark's North Ward, one of the poorest areas in the city.

Newark, with 30% of its population of Latino origin, fits the profile of the truly poor city and ranks first (1 representing most distressed and 567 the least) on the 1993 New Jersey Municipal Distress Index. Many of Newark's residents face serious problems due to a high unemployment rate (12.8%), a per capita income of only \$9,424, a severe housing shortage, a high incidence of teenage pregnancies, rampant substance abuse, the highest crime rate of cities in the country (Uniform Crime Reports, State of New Jersey 1995), a very high incidence of AIDS, and limited knowledge of English. According to the 1990 Census, 37% of Newark's children under the age of 18 live in poverty. The percentage of children receiving AFDS in 1994 was 300% higher than the state average. The death rate for Newark teens in 1992 was 133% higher than the State average (Kids Count New Jersey: State and County Profiles of Child Well-being, 1994).

Newark's public schools have very large minority populations and a very high attrition rate. According to the study, "The Dropout Problem in New Jersey's Big Urban Schools: Educational Inequality and Governmental Inaction," published by the Department of Government Services, Rutgers University: In 1991, Newark's high school dropout rate between the number of students enrolled in the 9th grade and high school graduates 4 years later was 45%. The students tend to be primarily Latino and African American, who live at or below the poverty level. According to the 1990 Census, only 16% of Newark residents are high school graduates.

Low educational levels are closely linked to high poverty rates. Too many low-income Latinos and African Americans are at a disadvantage when competing for jobs because of a high rate of academic failure. In order for young people to succeed without a high school education, there must be an adequate number of low skill jobs available. In Newark, such jobs have been declining steadily since manufacturing industries that provide this kind of employment continue to move to other cities. Newark has experienced a considerable decline in manufacturing employment. While there has been an increase in jobs in the service sector, many of Newark's residents do not have the skills for these jobs. The changes in the economy indicate that for the first time in our history, a high school diploma may be the minimum acceptable qualification for any job in the future.

## Gaps in Existing Services and the Impact of This Service on Outcome

ASPIRA proposes to serve a student population that receives little outside assistance from local organizations. The lack of services offered to this population greatly increases the likelihood of these students dropping out of school. The high school dropout rate in Newark has consistently contributed to the many social ills that plague the city. It is obvious that in order to succeed in today's society, one must first succeed academically. Children who drop out of school, not only limit their opportunity for a better future, but are also a financial burden to society.

Both the Dr. Horton School and Luis Munoz Marin Middle School are located in economically depressed neighborhoods. The majority of the students at the schools come from low-income families, many of whom live at or below the poverty level, and are headed by single female parents, presently living on AFDC. These families face daily struggle for survival. Many live in cramped, dingy apartments. They are often hungry. The neighborhoods in which they live are squalid and dangerous. Often, the students come to school tired, hungry, depressed, anxious, angry and afraid. Generally they have low self-esteem, underdeveloped interpersonal and decision making skills, inadequate education, low perception of opportunities, and meager incentives to delay gratification. An average of 50% fail the Early Warning Test.

Students to be targeted for the program are those who demonstrate inadequate academic progress and/or identified as having potential but who have exhibited problems of adjustment or unsatisfactory academic proficiency. The ASPIRACorps Program is committed to improving the education, leadership skills, and civic responsibility of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth by broadening the range of school services available to students and parents, and by promoting community partnerships and service initiatives.

By providing enriching activities where students learn to appreciate education, they will achieve. The emphasis will be on having students take full advantage of educational opportunities, so that they will eventually be able to break the cycle of poverty in which they have been enmeshed. Lastly, the initiative will provide support to other agencies that offer After school programs, but who lack structure tutorial curriculum.

The primary benefactor of the ASPIRACorps Initiative is the Newark School District, which will have students receive academic support in the classroom and after school. Youngsters in the After School Program of La Casa de Don Pedro and FOCUS will improve in their school work and basic skills through the tutoring services of the ASPIRACorps staff members.

**Proposal Check List**  
**Fiscal Year 1997-1998**  
**United Way of Essex & West Hudson**

Contract #

*Please complete one form (both pages) for each Initiative.*

Agency Name ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey

Initiative Name ASPIRA AmeriCorps Program (also called the ASPIRacorp Program)

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, all questions are about this specific Initiative — not about your agency as a whole.

<p><b>Check One:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> This Initiative is <u>currently</u> being funded by UWEWH</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First time funding is being requested from UWEWH for this Initiative</p>	<p><b>Check Initiative Category:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education/Prevention</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Health/Human Services</p>	<p><b>Check Initiative Problem Area:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Crime/Delinquency</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family Empowerment</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness/Hunger</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Literacy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Un-/Underemployment</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Initiative Goal** (1) To improve the academic performance of students in Grades 6-8 at the Luis Munoz Marin Middle School and the Dr. Horton School in Newark's North Ward. (2) To enhance the civic responsibility of the students.

**Objectives** (Steps toward achieving the above goal) (1) To offer in-class teaching assistance to 20 classrooms. (2) To provide after-school tutoring to 70 students on a weekly basis. (3) To expose 120 students to "Time to Read" literacy program. (4) To expose 120 students to a minimum of 4 community service projects. (5) To improve overall academic progress of 150 student

**Financial information for submitted Initiative (Fiscal Year 1997-1998):**

Amount requested from UWEWH for this Initiative Fiscal Year 1997-1998	Total estimated budget for this Initiative Fiscal Year 1997-1998	Total estimated agency budget Fiscal Year 1997-1998
\$ 43,394	\$ 282,430	\$ 1,167,014

If your Initiative is currently (Fiscal Year 1996-1997) being funded by UWEWH complete this section:

Amount received from UWEWH for this initiative Fiscal Year 1996-1997	Total budget for this initiative Fiscal Year 1996-1997	Total agency budget Fiscal Year 1996-1997
\$	\$	\$

List all Initiative Collaborators (organizations with which you have well-defined relationships for this specific initiative—including a commitment to a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for success, and sharing of financial and other resources)

Name of Collaborator	Role of Collaborator
Newark Public Schools	Permit program to operate at the Dr. Horton School and the Luis Munoz Marin Middle School; and assign at least one guidance counselor at each school to be in charge of referring students to the program.
La Casa de Don Pedro	Permit 2 Corps members to provide tutoring to the children in its after school program, 2 times per wk.
FOCUS	Permit 2 corps members to tutor children in aft. sch. prog. 2 times per wk.

Please fill out the next page →

# SUMMARY CHECKLIST: SERVICES & TARGET POPULATIONS

Contract #

The following checklist is intended to give a broad snapshot of projected service delivery. Please do NOT attempt to describe all services or all clients. Only consider those primary services that the Initiative offers, and who makes up the majority of your target population. Read the entire list before making selections.

Note: Most of the table will be blank, since the intent is to match your primary services to the clients who will receive them.

EXAMPLE: An Initiative has only one primary service—Day Care. Most clients receiving this "Day Care" are seniors. Clients receiving this service mostly come from the North Ward in Newark, although a significant portion also come from Belleville and Nutley. See the first row in the table below to see how to record this information.

First, Check Initiative's Primary Services Below.	After checking your primary services, use the following two lists to record each primary service's target population, in order of prevalence (majority first).			
	1. Infants (<1) 2. Children (1-12) 3. Teens (13-19) 4. Adults (20-64) 5. Seniors (65+)	1. Belleville 2. East Newark 3. East Orange 4. Harrison 5. Irvington 6. Kearny	7. Maplewood 8. N. Arlington 9. Nutley 10. Orange 11. South Orange 12. West Orange	13. Newark (All Wards) 13a. East Ward 13b. West Ward 13c. Central Ward 13d. North Ward 13e. South Ward
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Day Care (Adult/Child)	5	13d, 1, 9		
<input type="checkbox"/> Day Care (Adult/Child)				
<input type="checkbox"/> After-School/Tutoring Svs.	3	13 d		
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Education/GED				
<input type="checkbox"/> Case Management				
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Abuse Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Educ./Outreach				
<input type="checkbox"/> Companionship				
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer Training				
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling				
<input type="checkbox"/> Crime/Delinq. Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Enrichment				
<input type="checkbox"/> Development Disabled Svs.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Assistance				
<input type="checkbox"/> ESL Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Empowerment				
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Provision/Distrib.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Health Care/Medical				
<input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Home Health Aid Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Homeless Shelters				
<input type="checkbox"/> Homemaker Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> I & R/Hotlines				
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Development/Placement				
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Training				
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Literacy Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring				
<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Safety				
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Leadership/Training				
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Advocacy				
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Services				
<input type="checkbox"/> Respite Care				
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education				
<input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Svs.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Teen Pregnancy				
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation				
<input type="checkbox"/> Other				